

Upper Country: A Journal of the Lake Superior Region

Volume 3

Article 2

2015

Corporate Supported Ethnic Conflict on the Mesabi Range, 1890-1930

Paul Lubotina

Austin Peay State University, paul.lubotina@ws.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.nmu.edu/upper_country

Recommended Citation

Lubotina, Paul (2015) "Corporate Supported Ethnic Conflict on the Mesabi Range, 1890-1930," *Upper Country: A Journal of the Lake Superior Region*: Vol. 3 , Article 2.

Available at: http://commons.nmu.edu/upper_country/vol3/iss1/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals and Peer-Reviewed Series at NMU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Upper Country: A Journal of the Lake Superior Region by an authorized editor of NMU Commons. For more information, please contact kmcdonou@nmu.edu, bsarjean@nmu.edu.

Corporate Supported Ethnic Conflict on the Mesabi Range, 1890-1930

Dr. Paul Lubotina
Department of History Austin Peay State University

One of the common ways corporations sought to thwart the rise of unions in the late 19th and early 20th century was by fomenting ethnic conflict among workers. For example, Andrew Carnegie and William Frick frequently played on ethnic tensions to break strikes in their ironworks. Beginning in the 1870s, the steel barons initially hired English, Irish, and German to work in their Pennsylvania plants. When those employees went on strike in the 1890s, the corporation brought in South Slavs, Poles, and Italians to replace the striking Western Europeans.¹ In 1941, workers at Henry Ford's River Rouge plant staged a sit down strike that Harry Bennett, the company's security chief tried to break. He armed African-American workers with clubs and knives, then sent them to attack the striking employees. While the attempt failed, because of intervention by Edsel Ford on behalf of the employees, the cases illustrate the way companies promoted ethnic tensions to stop unionization.² The tactic of using Eastern European and African-American workers to replace American and Western European would be played out in the mining towns of Minnesota's Mesabi Iron Range. During the early 20th century, the United States Steel Company and its subsidiary the Oliver Mining Company, repeatedly raised ethnic tensions to prevent workers from effectively bargaining collectively or expanding the power of labor unions. This paper will detail the origins of ethnic tensions and how the various mining companies on the Mesabi Range manipulated local ethnic groups as they sought to retain control over the ore fields.

In 1892, Charlemagne Tower, Frank Dietrich von Ahlen, and the Merritt brothers controlled most of the mining operations on the Mesabi Range, but the situation soon changed. In the late nineteenth century millionaires such as John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Oliver, and James J. Hill began to invest heavily in Mesabi mining operations. They all shared a common goal: the "vertical integration" of Mesabi ore into their economic holdings. If a single company acquired the Mesabi ore fields, had the ability to transport the raw materials to the steel towns of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, and possessed enough manufacturing capacity, they would control America's steel market.³ Each industrialist began to acquire land throughout Saint Louis County and vied with other investors to control the region.

The 1893 Depression permanently altered the economic structure of the Mesabi Range. Initially, the Merritts merged their Mountain Iron holdings with von Ahlen's mines in Hibbing in order to increase their control over all operations on the Mesabi Range. When the Merritts attempted to buy out their business partners in 1893 they overextended their finances and were unable to continue operations in Mountain Iron without new investors. The Merritts turned to John D. Rockefeller, Sr., for financial assistance. As founder of the Standard Oil Company and the architect of American financial trusts, Rockefeller had the funds to assist the Merritts even while the country suffered from an economic depression.⁴ He bought \$400,000 in bonds from the Merritts to improve their railroad connections and docks in Duluth. Rockefeller then formed the Lake Superior Consolidated Iron Mines Company, which merged six of his mining and iron companies with the Merritt's holdings and provided them with an additional half-million dollars. By 1894, renewed financial difficulty caused by the deepening depression forced the Merritts to ask Rockefeller for more aid. This allowed Rockefeller to gain a controlling interest in the company but he promised to sell the stocks back to the family the following year. When the Merritts failed to buy back or renew their options in 1895, Rockefeller gained control of the Lake Superior Consolidated Iron Mine Company's operations in Mountain Iron and Hibbing.

Rockefeller then moved to take over mining operations around Lake Vermilion. The process was relatively easy because Charlemagne Tower wanted to sell both the Minnesota Iron Company and the Duluth & Iron Range Railroad so that he could retire. Rockefeller bought the companies along with additional mines and property. He then concentrated on organizing all the new operations and improving the transportation of ore from Minnesota, across the Great Lakes, to the steel mills.

While Rockefeller was busy acquiring locally owned mines, Henry E. Oliver began an independent operation to supply his steelworks with Mesabi ore. In the 1880s, Oliver, who had become wealthy from manufacturing farm machinery, switched his interests to railroad building and smelting steel. He first visited Minnesota in 1892 to learn more about the Mesabi Range. Once convinced of the viability of Mesabi ore he formed the Oliver Iron Mining Company. He then began obtaining leases near Mountain Iron and Virginia to consolidate his hold on ore shipments, which ensured a constant supply to his Michigan and Pennsylvania mills.

Oliver had to formulate a safe manufacturing process for the Mesabi's soft ore because it exploded in furnaces built for hard hematite ores. Lacking adequate finances for the project, he contacted Andrew Carnegie for technical and financial assistance. After introducing the Bessemer Furnace to America in 1873, Carnegie already controlled most American steel manufacturing.⁵ In order to gain Carnegie's cooperation in the joint venture in 1893, Oliver gave Carnegie half of his mining stocks and eventually turned over control of the Oliver Mining Company to the steel-making giant. By 1897 Carnegie and Oliver had pioneered a new smelting procedure that enabled them to use the cheaper soft ore and undercut the steel prices of those still relying on hard ores.⁶

As the only manufacturers capable of processing soft ore, Carnegie and Oliver leased property from other investors in the region. In order to obtain additional supplies, they leased Rockefeller's Mesabi mines near Mountain Iron and paid him royalties on all ore shipments. They also turned to James J. Hill, leader of the Great Northern Railroad, and leased his railroad property that ran through Saint Louis County. Hill later formed the Great Northern Mining Trust and regained control of his mining property on the Mesabi Range, thus transforming the mining operations near Chisholm into the only major competition to Oliver Mining Company.⁷ With a major hold on the Mesabi region, Carnegie and Oliver began to discount the price of their ore from four dollars a ton to two dollars and fifty cents.⁸ When the new price forced many smaller companies out of business, Carnegie and Oliver bought the companies and gained a firmer financial hold on the region.

The consolidation process culminated in 1901 with the formation of America's first billion-dollar business, the United States Steel Company (USSC). J. Pierpont Morgan sought to unite 60 percent of the United States' steel-making capacity under his control by purchasing Carnegie Steel and merging his Federal Steel Company with Rockefeller's Lake Superior Consolidated Iron Mines.⁹ As the owner of America's wealthiest investment firm and with close financial ties to the federal government, Morgan had the financial capability for the buyout and merger.¹⁰ Carnegie, who wanted to retire from the steel business to pursue a philanthropic career, asked Charles Schwab, President of Carnegie Steel, to broker the financial transaction. Carnegie sold his holdings to Morgan, who in turn merged with Rockefeller and formed the United States Steel Corporation. Oliver Mining became a subsidiary of the new corporation and the leading corporate entity on the Mesabi Range. The move brought 41 mines, 1000 miles of track, and a fleet of 112 ships under the

direct control of Henry Oliver, who then used his new holdings to take control of more leases and competing businesses. By 1907 the Oliver Mining Company controlled 913 million tons of ore out the region's total of 1.2 billion.¹¹

As the dominant economic power in St. Louis County, Oliver Mining began to exert increased control over the region. What had once been a series of independent mining operations now came under the centralized control of Henry Oliver. In order to speed up production and ore shipment Oliver began to standardize hours and wages across the Mesabi region. Whereas workers previously left low-paying or dangerous work, they now found similarly poor conditions at all the Oliver mines. If the laborers protested against their working conditions or joined a strike, they soon found themselves "blackballed" from any of the mines run by the Oliver Company. The Oliver Mining Company employed several additional oppressive tactics to stop any further attempts at unionization in Mesabi mines. These included mass layoffs, importing new immigrant groups to increase ethnic tensions among miners, and hiring spies to identify union leaders.

Among the immigrant groups, Hibbing and Chisholm's Swedish community materialized first through the assistance of mining and railroad corporations. Edmund J. Longyear, the inventor of the diamond-tipped drill bit, played a leading role in transporting skilled workers from Michigan to Minnesota. In the 1890s, he established the Longyear Mine near Hibbing, as well as the Pillsbury Mine in Chisholm. Longyear brought the initial group of Swedish immigrants from Marquette, Michigan, mining operations to begin the geological exploration of the Western Mesabi Range. The Swedes operated numerous diamond-tipped drills that easily cut through rock and allowed surveyors to quickly map the boundaries of ore fields. Once the mapping had been completed, new mining operations began in several locations near Hibbing and Chisholm.¹² As experienced surveyors and miners they soon found themselves in supervisory roles over the newly arriving immigrant populations in the region and provided the labor needed to extract the iron ore.¹³ James J. Hill, who owned the Great Northern Railway and Great Northern Mining Company, believed that Swedes were especially diligent and trustworthy employees. He advertised in both the United States and Europe for Swedish and other Scandinavians, not only to work directly for the Great Northern Company but also to populate the areas surrounding his rail-lines.¹⁴ As the railroad stretched north out of St. Paul to Hibbing, immigrants had corporate encouragement to take the lucrative mining jobs on the Mesabi Iron Range.

The Swedish population in Hibbing soon built both a Lutheran and Methodist church, along with the *Söner af Vasa* (Sons of Vasa) Temperance Hall.¹⁵ The churches and temperance movement served as forces of political conservatism that also sought to preserve Swedish heritage in Hibbing. These organizations settled local disputes among individuals or political and religious factions. With few major problems encountered within the enclave, the community developed into a stable, middle-class minority group that supported both the Republican Party and local temperance movements. At the state level, a series of Scandinavian-born governors led Minnesota's progressive-era reform movement. Between 1899 and 1918, Governors Lind, Johnson, Eberhart, and Burnquist transformed the state through a series of insurance, conservation, anti-corruption, and labor reforms. While not always successful in their endeavors, the governors set the tone of Minnesota's century-long course toward a liberal state government.

Like the Swedes, the Finnish population also started in northern Michigan, moved to the Mesabi Range, and eventually comprised nearly half of Hibbing's immigrant population. Unlike the Swedish population, the Finnish immigrants arrived in Hibbing divided by two ethnic factions, one Finnish-speaking (*Fennomen*), the other Swedish-speaking (*Svencomen*). Each set up separate social organizations and religious institutions. *Svencomen* attended the Swedish Lutheran Church in Hibbing and built a separate Sons of Vasa Temperance Hall with the help of the local Swedish population.¹⁶ Similarly, *Fennomen* constructed a Finnish Lutheran Church, two temperance halls, and the Workers' Hall for Socialists. Thus, the two groups of Finnish immigrants who moved to Hibbing had their own agenda and cooperated little with one another.

The first Italian immigrants arrived in Duluth during 1869 from Lombardy via Winnipeg. Between 1875 and 1881 the number of miners from Northern Italy quadrupled. Most went to work on the Mesabi Range.¹⁷ The Northern Italians, called Austrians by local newspapers, came from Piedmont, Lombardy, Venice and Tyrol. The central Italians originated in Emilia-Romagna, the Marches, and Umbria. Both the Northern and Central Italians arrived first and dominated the Vermilion area that needed experienced underground miners. Meanwhile, Southern Italians from Abruzzi-Molise, Campania, Calabria, and Sicily found unskilled labor positions in the open-pit mines around Hibbing and Chisholm.¹⁸ Thus, the Northern and Southern Italians separated geographically in a fashion similar to the conditions in Italy. Southern Italians dominated the southwest end of the Mesabi Range while the Northern and Central Italians controlled the

northeast portion. The dominance of two thousand unskilled Italian laborers around Hibbing led to a large militant population ready to embrace radical methods and organizations.¹⁹ They supported radical labor unions such as the Western Federation of Miners and the Industrial Workers of the World, organizations that often resorted to strikes as a means to improve wages and working conditions for immigrant laborers. Both unions contained a large number of Italians who contributed leaders and demonstrators to the three major strikes on the Mesabi Range. As a result, the Southern Italians encountered opposition from the few Northern Italians in Hibbing and earned a reputation as radicals among the other immigrant groups, especially the Finns and Slovenians.

Slovenian missionaries led the South Slavic movement to the Great Lakes region. The migration started in the early nineteenth century, when Bishop Frederic Baraga from Ljubljana began missionary work among Native-Americans in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.²⁰ The Slovenes had initially settled in Michigan's Upper Peninsula where they found work in the copper mines on the Keweenaw and Marquette Ranges. Approximately three thousand Slovenians followed Catholic leaders to the Mesabi Range after reading about their experiences in local publications. The experienced miners moved to Minnesota where they helped to explore and map iron ore deposits on the Mesabi Range. They also excavated the initial underground shafts near Tower and Sudan. Then, as the vast western mining districts around Hibbing and Virginia opened, the demand for unskilled laborers increased, eventually attracting over ten thousand Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian workers to Minnesota.²¹

Following the example set by the Slovene population from Michigan, more Slavic immigrants followed James J. Hill's Great Northern Railway as it moved north out of Minneapolis and Saint Cloud. Another Slovenian priest, Fr. Joseph Buh, had been leading missionaries from Saint Cloud before expanding his work to Duluth and Saint Louis County.²² In 1892 Fr. Buh arrived in Tower to begin a Catholic mission among miners in the Mesabi Range. After building the first rectory in Tower he started nine missions in Ely, Two Harbors, Biawabik, Hibbing, Virginia, Mountain Iron, McKinley, Eveleth, and the Vermilion Indian Reserve.²³ He also opened the first Catholic Church in Hibbing and led the Slovenian Catholic movement on the Mesabi Range.

Hibbing's Slovenian population worked closely with Croatian immigrants and the two then founded St. Joseph's Catholic Church in the nearby town of Chisholm. The Serbs also founded their own Orthodox Church in Chisholm. The Catholic and Orthodox congregations remained at odds, discouraging interfaith marriages and maintaining minimal contacts with each other. The situation further declined after 1907 when the Slovenians supported radical Italians in a strike that the Oliver Mining Company broke by importing Montenegrin Serbs. The Serbs remained in Hibbing until the First World War when many returned home to protect their families from the invading Austro-Hungarian armies. The remaining Serbs finally began to cooperate with the other Slavs in the local Yugoslav Movement (United Slav) that arrived in America after the 1919 foundation of the Yugoslavian state in Europe. The Slovenians then played prominent roles in Hibbing and Chisholm as doctors, merchants, and politicians.

In Hibbing, where inter-ethnic conflict played a part in the daily lives of the town's immigrant populations. Swedish, Finnish, Italian, and South Slavic immigrants struggled through periods of discrimination, although over different lengths of time. In Hibbing, class status and political participation played major roles in the ethnic assimilation of immigrant groups. Middle-class Swedish, Finnish, and Italian immigrants assimilated into American society before working-class laborers from the same ethnic groups. Working-class immigrants endured a protracted period of adjustment as they sought a political voice in the community through participation in various socialist parties. These ethnic battles not only comprised the majority of immigrant interactions during the early period of community development, they also contributed to the assimilation process by uniting diverse enclaves along class lines.

The protracted fighting began after 1894, when large-scale mining operations in Hibbing and Chisholm, attracted the first wave of Cornish, Northern Italian, Swedish, and *Ostrobothnian* (Western Finland) Finnish immigrants to the region. These skilled underground miners dominated the available high-paying positions on the Mesabi Range. Underground miners made more money because they were paid by the ton for the ore removed. Moreover, they worked throughout the year. An experienced miner working a rich vein could earn nearly four dollars a day or 96 dollars a month for his labors. These open-pit mines only operated during the seven frost-free months in Northern Minnesota. The mining companies considered the open-pit miners unskilled laborers and paid them two dollars a day or 48 dollars a month.²⁴ In comparison, an Oliver

Mining foreman earned 80 to 120 dollars a month, plus production bonuses, while a District Superintendent earned over 6,000 dollars a year, plus production bonuses.²⁵ Between 1900 and 1908 the emphasis of mining operations surrounding Hibbing and Chisholm evolved from underground mines to open-pit excavations.

The transition made the roles of experienced hard-rock miners obsolete as the mining companies brought in much cheaper unskilled immigrant need for unskilled laborers to remove cover soil and ore. The opportunity to work in the mines attracting a second wave of working-class Finnish, Southern Italian, Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian immigrants. As the number of underground mines declined, skilled positions became scarcer and job competition increased, leading to increased conflict among the contending immigrant groups trying to survive in the harsh conditions.

Most of the Cornish immigrants left for new underground mining opportunities opening in the far western states, while the Swedish, Finnish, and Northern Italian miners who stayed began to take supervisory positions in both the remaining underground and burgeoning open pit mines. Southern Italian, South Slavic, and newly arrived Finnish laborers then replaced the experienced miners in excavation operations. The American citizens of the region recognized the first wave of Swedish, Finnish, and Northern Italian supervisors and merchants as middle class. The immigrants had obtained lucrative jobs, bought homes, attended Church, and promoted temperance activities. Thus, by 1907, the established European immigrants conformed to the American ideals and sought to protect the mining companies and their economic policies.

The arrival of second wave groups of Finnish, Southern Italian, and Slovenian laborers further complicated the ethnic relations of Hibbing's diverse population. For example, Finnish immigrants from *Ostrobothnia* who arrived after 1900 consisted of displaced rural laborers, while the Helsinki and Tampere industrial regions also contributed a large number of Marxist Social Democrats who fled political persecution by Russian officials. Many of the *Ostrobothnian* immigrants suffered from alcoholism and had grown up in a culture of violence that endorsed the use of knives to settle personal disputes. Called *puukkojunnkari* or the "knife-fighters" in Finland, they soon earned the names "Black Finns" or "Jack Pine Savages" by the Americans because of their constant drunken state and frequent fights in Hibbing's saloons.²⁶ Local newspaper reported one dramatic incident where four drunken Finns attacked Night Patrolman John McHale with their guns and knives. The officer initially attempted to stop the men from firing their guns on the street,

only to be stabbed in the face and neck by the assailants. Afterwards a gun battle ensued but the Finns were too drunk to hit the patrolman. A posse soon formed and tracked down the Finns, arrested three who narrowly avoided a lynch mob.

Because of the frequency of these types of incidents, issues of ethnicity, race, and class merged into a toxic quagmire that increased conflicts between the diverse populations of the Mesabi Range. The Marxist “Red Finns,” along with the “Black Finns,” were seen as distinctly inferior to the middle-class immigrants who had more effectively assimilated American political and cultural norms. Thus, middle-class Finnish immigrants denounced the activities of “Red” and “Black” Finns, thereby reinforcing their “white” status among Anglo-Protestant Americans.²⁷ Further, Anglo-Protestant Americans recognized a racial difference between “white” Finns and “Black” or “Red” Finns.²⁸

As a result, Hibbing effectively split into three major racial and class groups; Americans occupied the top political and industrial positions, “white” middle-class Northern Europeans along with a small minority of Northern Italians the second, and a third consisted of “black” Northern and Southern European laborers. The Americans regarded all the Europeans as inferior but made allowances for “white” Northern Europeans and Northern Italians. Northern Europeans and Northern Italians considered the dark-skinned, Southern Europeans racially inferior. They applied some of the same terms, such as dirty, ignorant, lazy, and untrustworthy to their new Latin and Slavic neighbors as they had used in Europe. Conversely, the Latin people of Southern Italy and the Slavs from Slovenia felt culturally superior to the people of Northern Europe, whom they considered cold and barbarous.

After 1900, relations among Americans, “white” Europeans, and “black” Europeans began badly and declined over the next few years. Initially, Northern Europeans resented the job competition created by the arrival of Southern Europeans. They complained that “blacks” had come to the United States and taken their jobs.²⁹ The attitude of Northern Europeans clearly indicated that they had adopted American nativistic theories and racial attitudes toward the Southern Europeans. The “white” Finns and Swedes did not want the “black” Italian and Slovenian workers in their towns any more than their American neighbors wanted them.

As a result, the Mesabi Range split into two types of communities, with the towns of Hibbing and Virginia forming “white towns” because of their large Nordic populations, while neighboring Chisholm and

Eveleth became “black towns” because of the large numbers of Italians and Slavs who lived in the communities. Tensions between the two communities remained high, but often turned deadly when miners received their monthly paychecks and began to binge on alcohol. The Nordic miners expressed their racist and nativistic prejudices with physical attacks against Southern Europeans. In one 1905 occurrence twenty Italians and five Finns began throwing rocks at each other. The violence escalated into a gun battle that left one Finn severely wounded with a bullet in his head before deputies broke up the fight.³⁰

The prejudices and conflicts led to stereotypes that the anthropologist John Syrjamaki collected while investigating the region in the late 1930’s. He found some of the common perceptions of Southern Europeans by Americans and Nordics were: “1) You can’t expect much from foreigners from Southern and Eastern Europe, it has been said that you can’t make a silk purse out of sow’s ear; 2) Slavs and Italians need a boss over them who will yell and swear at them. They expect it and you can’t get any work out of them if they are not driven because there is no use trying to reason with them; 3) Southern Europeans don’t make good farmers here on the Range and not many live on the land. The reason is that they don’t have enough initiative to do anything without a boss over them; 4) You can count on the Northern Italians, but do not expect much from the Southern Italians. They are the short, black bunch and you can always spot them as being no good.”³¹ Thus, the Anglo-Protestant Americans and “white” middle-class immigrants distinguished the racially superior Northern Italians from the inferior “black” working-class, Southern Italian and Slavic populations. The racial distinction helped to reinforce the superior position of middle-class immigrants, but also contributed to an increase in racially based abuses of Southern Europeans in the mines surrounding Hibbing.

Since Swedish, Finnish, and Northern Italian immigrants dominated the supervisory positions in the mines, the middle-class immigrants had the power to act on their prejudices against the working-class Southern Europeans. The most important job a supervisor had in the early twentieth century was to push out a maximum amount of ore, in a minimum amount of time, for the lowest cost. All other considerations, such as worker safety and labor relations, remained secondary concerns during the early phases of Hibbing’s development. When the demand for increased production combined with traditional prejudices against dark-skinned people, conditions in the mines for Southern Europeans deteriorated.

The foremen, especially the Swedish, gained a reputation for cruelty and indifference to Southern European laborers.³² A typical attitude of the time was that mules were more important than laborers because animals cost money to train, whereas miners feed themselves and can be easily replaced. Foremen became adept at manipulating laborers by arbitrarily changing wages and replacing anybody who slipped below expected output levels. Additionally, laborers had to submit to a system of gifts and kickbacks, which included forced sexual favors from miners' wives, in order to keep their jobs or gain employment in lucrative positions.³³

In addition to the overt abuses perpetrated by supervisors, miners also faced abysmal working conditions. Since supervisors did not want to promote Eastern and Southern European miners to authoritative positions, the bosses could not effectively communicate with most of the laborers. As a result, training for itinerant miners remained rudimentary. Miners also worked ten-hour shifts, using only hammers, picks, and shovels to remove hundreds of tons of ore each day. The long hours and heavy work usually caused the average miners' health to fail after five years. Once incapacitated by their work in the mines, immigrants usually turned to farming as a means of survival.³⁴ The combination of hard work, long hours, uncaring supervisors, a lack of communication, and a large body of unskilled workers led to at least 583 injuries or deaths between 1905 and 1915 in the Mesabi mines.³⁵

Harsh working conditions in the mines caused hostility to rise between the working and middle-class immigrant populations of Hibbing. Miners resented their treatment at the hands of both middle-class immigrants and Americans. Instead of quietly enduring their injustices, working-class miners turned to violent retribution as a means of revenge. During the nineteenth century, Southern Italian peasants killed abusive aristocrats to extract economic and political conciliations from reluctant leaders. In Hibbing, the tactic surfaced in 1905, when an Italian immigrant named Sam Mastrianna tried to murder mining superintendent Grier Thompson after he refused to compensate the laborer for his loss of a foot in a mining accident. Rather than support the injured miner, local newspapers characterized Mastrianna as shiftless and lazy for not working at an easy job given to him by Thompson.³⁶ The incident not only illustrated the overt racism of mining officials and the local newspapers, but also the conditions that helped radicalize the immigrant laborer populations.

Shortly after the incident, these immigrants organized the first labor unions and adopted collective action to improve their working conditions.

In 1904 and 1905, the Western Federation of Miners and the Industrial Workers of the World organized around cadres of Finnish, Slovenian, and Italian Socialists. In the summer of 1905, the first in a series of major strikes erupted as workers sought better wages and safer conditions in the mines. While the 1905 strike ended in defeat, the immigrants continued to organize and strengthen their unions. As a result of unionization activities, Theofilo Petriella, an Italian immigrant, led another major Mesabi Range strike in 1907 that shut down mining operations across the length of the mining districts and Duluth. In order to end the strike the Oliver Mining Company, a subsidiary of the U.S. States Steel Corporation, brought in Montenegrin Serbs to destabilize multi-ethnic cooperation in unions and fill vacant positions in the mines.

The Oliver Mining Company's choice to bring in Montenegrin Serbs exacerbated existing racial and ethnic conflicts. Many of the striking Slovenian and Croatians miners came from the *Krajina* located on the northern border of Montenegro. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the Serbian and Montenegrin governments had implemented an expansionist foreign policy that sought to incorporate Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian populations of the *Krajina* into a larger Serbian state. The actions of the Serbs alienated the Croats and Slovenians of the region, who abhorred the thought of incorporation into the Serbian Empire. Further, the introduction of additional Eastern European immigrants to the Western European-dominated city of Hibbing, caused additional rifts between the classes. Hibbing's Finnish population already resented the intrusion of Southern European immigrants. By adding more Slavic workers, the Oliver Mining Company raised racial tensions in an already violent situation caused by the strike.

The Montenegrin strike-breakers brought to Hibbing were the last clan-based society in Europe. Centuries of conflict with the Ottoman Empire led to a militarized culture based on men fighting constant wars against Muslims. The men successfully defended the country from repeated Muslim invasions, thereby preventing Montenegro's incorporation into the Ottoman Empire. When not fighting Muslims, the men participated in blood-feuds with other Montenegrin clans that could last for generations.

As a result of the constant wars with Muslims and the blood-feuds, the Montenegrins failed to develop industry or agriculture in their homelands. The country contained few cities and suffered from widespread

poverty. Rather than work, Montenegrin men raided and plundered nearby Muslim communities to support their families.³⁷ In order to provide food for their families, women stayed at home and cultivated their fields, while men stood by to watch for possible attacks by Muslims or other Montenegrins. Additionally, men frequently beat their wives to increase agricultural production or to enforce a strict moral code that permeated Montenegrin society.³⁸

The rampant poverty in Montenegro led the country's Czar Nicholas to enact a broad modernization program for his nation. He passed laws to curb blood feuds, raiding, and the indiscriminate killing of Muslims. Nicholas also increased educational opportunities and improved agricultural production. The modernization program resulted in a major population increase that led to land scarcity. By 1907, overpopulation and burdensome taxes led to a mass migration to America, where the Montenegrins found the Oliver Mining Company eager for their services on the Mesabi Range.³⁹

In the summer of 1907, the Oliver Mining Company transported several hundred Montenegrin strike-breakers to the Mesabi Range. When the Montenegrins replaced Finnish, Italian, Slovenian laborers in the mines, the Mesabi strike broke down. Immigrant laborers needed their jobs to survive in Northern Minnesota, so they returned to work without gaining any concessions from the company. The Italian strike leader and chief organizer, Theofilo Petriella, fled the region, which ended the first attempts to unionize the Mesabi Range, immigrant miners.

Following the strike, the U.S. Steel Corporation barred numerous Finns from returning to work in the mines. The loss of Finnish labor changed the ethnic composition of Hibbing's mines. While Finns dominated most positions prior to the strike, afterwards the Hibbing Mining district reported that they employed over six hundred Americans, thirteen hundred Slavs, nearly four hundred Italians, and only two hundred Finns and one hundred Swedes.⁴⁰ With most of the working-class Finns pushed out of the mines, the Slavs took over their positions as cheap laborers. This development added to the existing ethnic tensions. Thus, the mining companies purposely introduced the Montenegrins to disrupt relations between the Finnish, Italian, and Slovenian workers and preclude the possibility of more labor strife by causing the immigrants to fight each other rather than cooperate collectively.

During the months following the strike, the Montenegrin strikebreakers proved to be more intractable and less productive than the Finnish, Italian, and Slovenian workers they had replaced.⁴¹ Montenegrin culture had traditionally relied on female labor to produce crops, while men fought or raided for their income. While the Montenegrin men proved to be effective strike-breakers, they failed as miners and fell back on traditional methods to obtain money. In 1908, when a forest fire destroyed most of Chisholm, the Montenegrins sacked the town. After the Montenegrins plundered the remaining valuables, local officials called in soldiers from Hibbing to restore order. After a brief struggle the soldiers arrested ninety Montenegrins and returned many of the stolen goods.⁴²

The local middle-class, both the American and European populations, then turned against the Montenegrins who had demonstrated their savagery and backwardness by attacking their neighbors. Supervisors soon adopted the epithet “Monteniggers” for the Slavic strikebreakers and poked fun at their unwillingness to wash or remove their boots when they went to bed.⁴³ The Montenegrins responded by calling their supervisors “*tcuda*,” meaning tobacco chewer, referring to the Swedish propensity for using chewing tobacco. Name-calling soon evolved into a violent ethnic and class-based political struggle among immigrant groups and Americans. The middle-class populations began to organize themselves politically, to stop the growing power of labor unions among the working-class Finnish, Southern Italian, and Slavic laborers who had sought protection from the systematic abuses in Mesabi area mines and towns.

During 1907, ethnic tensions between the American, English, Swedish, and Finnish middle-class populations and the Italian, Slovenian, and Finnish strikers led to the formation of two white supremacist groups, the Guardians of Liberty and the Ku Klux Klan. Hibbing’s Klansmen made their first reported public appearance in 1907, just before the strike began.⁴⁴ The attack began after William Brown, a well-known social reformer, supported the rights of workers to strike. Brown, who was also the superintendent of the Duluth, Missabe & Northern Railroad, received an anonymous phone call. The caller stated that Brown should come downtown and a carriage would arrive shortly to pick him up. When Brown refused, a group of Klan members dressed in hoods surrounded his home and began to beat on the walls with sticks. After a half-hour delay, Brown emerged from his house. The crowd bound and blind-folded Brown, then transported him to an area near the Hibbing Hotel. Once there, the Klan charged him with being a “Benedict without cause,” presumably

for his support of the miners.⁴⁵ Klan members stripped Brown of his clothing and beat him in front of a large crowd. In a bizarre display of public humiliation, Klan members placed Brown on a wagon pulled by elks and paraded the victim around town until dawn.⁴⁶ Most significantly, the attack on Brown predated a much wider expansion of Klan activities in the United States that began during the First World War.⁴⁷

The appearance of the Klan in Northern Minnesota before 1915 indicates the level of racial, ethnic, and class hostility in the region. Anglo-Protestant Americans and middle-class immigrants, especially Swedes and Finns, in the towns of Duluth, Hibbing, and Virginia, supported the Klan. The popularity of the Klan attracted large crowds to public events across the Mesabi Range and Duluth. The following year Dr. Hiram Evans, Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, appeared in Hibbing and Virginia for the largest Klan rally in the Northwest. Arrowhead Klan Number Six sponsored the event that brought approximately 6,000 people, representing sixteen Klaverns, from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and South Dakota to the Mesabi Range.⁴⁸ Dr. Evans gave a speech where he assailed the Roman Catholic, Democratic presidential hopeful, Alfred E. Smith for his allegiance to the Pope. The festivities ended in a parade of robed Klansmen marching through the business districts of Virginia and a large fireworks display.⁴⁹

The Klan gained strength among the populations of Hibbing and Virginia with a call for “white” unity based on middle-class values, Protestantism, temperance, anti-Catholicism, anti-socialism, and the Republican Party. They shared the desire to suppress the burgeoning political power of all Catholics and Socialists on the Mesabi Range.⁵⁰ The ideology of the Klan conformed to all the major characteristics of “white” Swedish and Finnish immigrants who lived in the region. After the attack on Brown, the Klan increased activity across the Mesabi Range and Duluth. Catholics found crosses burning in front of their churches while attacks on immigrants, especially Socialists, became more common. In 1926, a group of 1700 people attended a speech given by W. Williams of Duluth who presented the goals of the organization to make America safe for white Americans.⁵¹

During the First World War, two events helped stimulate Klan activities on the Mesabi Range. In 1915, the population of the Mesabi Range and Duluth flocked to see the David Ward Griffith’s movie, “Birth of a Nation,” which was based on a Civil War and Reconstruction novel by Thomas Dixon. The movie illustrated how the Klan saved the South from depredations caused by “crazed” former slaves, who “illegally” seized

power with the help of Northern Reconstructionists. In the movie, after an African-American Union soldier tried to rape a white woman, the Klan rose up in revolt and overthrew the “corrupt” government and in the process taught the Northerners the errors of their liberal ideas. The public on the Mesabi Range received the movie as the “naked truth.” Soon they had an opportunity to imitate the Klan members they saw in the movies.⁵²

Nationally, approximately fifty million people eventually viewed *Birth of a Nation*. The movie became an effective propaganda tool for white supremacists and paramilitary groups across the United States.⁵³ In Alabama, William J. Simmons, a former soldier and Methodist minister, used the opening of the movie to gather former Klan members and local fraternal organizations to reconstitute a new and more powerful Ku Klux Klan. In 1915, his small group of fifteen men met atop Stone Mountain and burned the first of many crosses across the United States.⁵⁴ William Simmons also provided a model of Klan support for government agencies that sought to locate and arrest subversives during the First World War. After he joined the national Citizens’ Bureau of Investigation, the Klan began their search for enemy aliens, slackers, strike leaders, illegal alcohol producers, and immoral women who could disrupt the war effort. In Mobile, Alabama, the Klan intervened in a shipyard strike and tracked down draft-dodgers.⁵⁵ The law enforcement activities demonstrated by Southern Klan members reached Northern Minnesota in 1917, after Socialist and Syndicalist immigrants led a series of strikes that shut down mines and lumber mills across the Mesabi Range through their support of the largely working-class, immigrant union, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

Between 1916 and 1917, over ten thousand Finnish, Italian, and Slovenian immigrants staged a series of strikes on both the Mesabi and nearby Cuyuna Iron Ranges, plus a separate strike among lumber workers in the region. Led by William Haywood’s radical union, the Industrial Workers of the World, immigrant strikers shut down lumber and iron production at the critical juncture of America’s entry into the First World War. Additionally, Haywood called on all IWW members to oppose the war by slowing production and draft-dodging.⁵⁶ The fear of immigrant insurrection and anti-war activities led Governor Burnquist to form the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety to coordinate a statewide response to the threats posed by the large alien population. The Commission of Public Safety contacted conservative Finnish leaders to help suppress the anti-war activities of “Red” Finns who dominated the IWW in Northern Minnesota. Finnish Attorney Victor

Gran led the movement to arrest “Red” Finns with the help of Minnesota National Guard troops, with the ultimate goal of Americanizing the remaining malcontent Finnish population.⁵⁷

During the war, Commission of Public Safety Officers, city officials, local police departments, and the Ku Klux Klan all worked in conjunction to suppress IWW activities across Northern Minnesota. Inevitably, violence broke out as National Guard troops and local police officers sacked IWW headquarters in Duluth and Hibbing.⁵⁸ Police even shot at three suspected Finnish IWW members when they tried to hang leaflets in Hibbing.⁵⁹ Violence against immigrant Socialists on the Mesabi Range culminated in the lynching of a Finnish war protester. In September 1918, the Knights of Liberty members, a suspected branch of the Ku Klux Klan, pulled Olli Kinkonnen from his home in Duluth. The attackers first tarred and feather Kinkonnen, then hanged him from a tree in a nearby park. While officially declared a suicide, the Knights took responsibility for an act that “served to warn other slackers.”⁶⁰ The lynching instilled fear that permeated all the immigrant communities and reinforced the class and ethnic divisions in Northern Minnesota.

The murder of Olli Kinkonnen demonstrated the complexity of ethnic relations in Northern Minnesota. The middle-class Finns, under the leadership of Victor Gran, worked with the Anglo-Protestant American population to suppress the “Red” Finns of the region. By joining the Commission of Public safety, the “white” Finns demonstrated their allegiance to the United States. As a result, the “white” Finns found acceptance as patriotic Americans. In order to gain the respect of Anglo-Protestant Americans, the “white” Finns had to repress their fellow “black” or “red” Finnish compatriots. When the Knights of Liberty lynched Kinkonnen they showed the same racial prejudices that the Ku Klux Klan held against African-Americans or Catholics. The lynching also illustrated the racial hierarchy that placed “white” middle-class Finnish and Swedish immigrants above “Red” Finns or “black” Italians or Slovenians who also supported the IWW’s anti-war stance or strike activities.

The alleged superiority of the middle-class Swedish immigrant population also led to the early adaptation of American racial theory and an increased hostility toward African Americans. The Swedish supervisors in the mines around Hibbing already demonstrated their disdain for the working-class Finnish, Italian, and Slavic laborers through their systematic abuse of the workers. When the Swedish population came into contact with African Americans they exhibited the same caustic reactions as their white American hosts.

Similarly, immigrants from Finland, Italy, and the Balkans also abused African Americans on the Mesabi Range to demonstrate their superiority over a more maligned race.

The first interactions between the various immigrant populations on the Mesabi Range and African Americans occurred in the nearby city of Duluth. A few hundred African Americans ventured to St. Louis County where most worked as railroad porters on the Duluth, Missabe & Northern or The Great Northern Railroads. While only a small minority in a largely Scandinavian population, the African Americans experienced the same racial prejudices that were found in any American city of the era. Despite their negative reception in Duluth, a small number of African Americans chose to follow the rail lines and take up residence in the remote town of Hibbing.

Newspaper accounts mention only two male and one female African American who lived in Hibbing or the surrounding countryside. The woman, a pediatric nurse named Hattie Mosely, became a local celebrity because of her courageous work in Hibbing's isolation hospital treating people stricken by influenza, smallpox, and tuberculosis. Locals believed that her black skin protected her from white man's illnesses and placed faith in the nurse's folk medicine based on mustard plasters.⁶¹ Of the men, the elderly "Uncle" Henry Briscoe, a Civil War veteran, lived peacefully as a pensioner in Hibbing.⁶²

The other male African American, A.M. Ross, worked for several years as a barber and musician, only to be run out of town in 1906 for having an affair with a married white woman. The incident unfolded after Ross's angry wife reported the affair to local authorities. Deputies caught the interracial lovers "embracing" in the National Café that also served as a Chinese laundry and hotel.⁶³ After officials arrested Ross and his white lover, the local liberal newspaper ran an account entitled, "Lionized Coon Hurlled from Pedestal." The article illustrated racial attitudes among Hibbing's citizens. The report pointed out that:

Ross, whom the woman endearingly referred to as "Gussie" is a character in keeping with all his blood; he presumes on every acquaintance and incident that would have a tendency to place him on equality with white people. Owing to his ability as a musician he has been given preference over other musicians in the city, and his ability was pampered until he acquired a full-grown notion that he was a little bit better than ordinary run of white folks, and that his credentials for entry into the portals of correct society were genuine. While his social overturning will be killing to him, he will be passed on along by those who endured his presence alone for his musical powers and he will be consigned to the garbage heap, which should have been his resting place long ago. The old saying that 'give a nigger an inch and he'll take a mile,' was never better exemplified than in this case of the colored man in question.

After the arrest, Village Attorney Hughes prosecuted the case in front of Judge Brady, who “adjudged [the couple] guilty of a statutory offense against the peace, dignity, and moral precepts of the great commonwealth of Minnesota.” The judge fined each defendant fifty dollars and told them to leave the area.⁶⁴ Once Ross left Hibbing, no other young, African-American male lived permanently in the town until after the Second World War.

The transient African Americans who visited Hibbing found the community openly hostile. In 1912, J. Edmund Cantrell of Crawfordsville, Tennessee, located near Memphis, came to Hibbing in order to enter his horse in a local race. As a black man, he met with widespread discrimination wherever he went. He described how locals laced his food with cayenne pepper, then insulted, bullied, and browbeat him on numerous occasions. He avowed that conditions in Hibbing were far worse than in the South because Northerners had no experience with Negroes, while at least Southerners knew how to act with a modicum of respect. He stated, “Your town is one of the worst I have visited. I found it impossible to get any service at several of your restaurants on account of my color. But that is the usual condition in the north.”⁶⁵ Cantrell’s statement clearly indicated the overall hostility of Hibbing’s population toward African Americans. Both the American and immigrant populations participated in the racist behavior and with ethnic tensions on the rise because of the abysmal working conditions in the mines, the situation continued to deteriorate.

Conditions worsened for African Americans in 1913 when James J. Hill tried to employ twenty-three “Alabama Africans” at the Kelly Lake train station near South Hibbing as summer laborers. Hill informed the community that a general labor shortage forced him hire only “the best sort” of Negro experienced in northern working conditions. As the black workers received only two-thirds the pay of white employees, the citizens of the region recognized how the situation threatened to lower wages for everyone. Hill promised the local population that they would not have to worry that the black men would visit local stores, hotels, or restaurants, because Great Northern officials would care for all their needs inside the rail yard. Once rumors circulated that 500-1000 additional “Alabama Africans” would arrive in Hibbing, the population threatened a major strike if the black men did not leave.⁶⁶ Hill had no other choice than to remove the men. He did not try to reintroduce African Americans to the Mesabi Range.

Another clash occurred in 1920, when a white woman in Duluth accused three African-American circus workers of rape, which caused general outcry in the community. Since 1899, Duluth's Swedish population had read lurid tales of African-American lynchings carried out in the south after accusations of rape or murder by white women.⁶⁷ The movie "Birth of a Nation" also glamorized lynching as a proper response to the defilement of a white woman by an African American. With racial tensions still high after the recent lynching of Olli Kinkkonen and increasing Klan activities in Duluth, the incident turned into the largest mass lynching of African Americans in Minnesota's history.

After police arrested the suspects, nearly five thousand people surrounded the Duluth jail and then stormed the facility that held the accused rapists. The mob seized Isaac McGhie, Elmer Jackson, and Nate Green, then moved down the street and hanged each man in turn from a city light pole. In the aftermath of the murders many members of Duluth's African-American community moved away out of fear for their lives.⁶⁸ Out of the crowd of thousands who watched and participated in the events, only three men were convicted of the lesser charge of rioting. Two Americans, Louis Dondino and Gilbert Stephenson, along with the Swedish immigrant Carl John Alfred Hammerberg, spent only fifteen months in prison for this crime.⁶⁹

Public and private reactions to the lynchings differed widely. Publicly, Governor J.A.A. Burnquist (1915-1921), a second generation Swedish immigrant, immediately called out the local militia and ordered an investigation of the Duluth event.⁷⁰ Local English language newspapers followed the governor's lead and decried the horrible events. Similarly, the Finnish language papers *Industrialisti* (Industrialist, a Socialist paper) and *Siirtolainen* (Migrant) criticized the actions of the mob, calling the event a lynching and a murder.⁷¹ Privately, the Swedish language newspaper, *Duluth Posten*, failed to address the lynching directly, only mentioning the event as part of an upcoming political speech.⁷² Duluth's other Swedish language paper, *Duluth Scandinav*, supplied graphic details on the rape of a young woman by six gun-wielding black men.⁷³ The lynching also provided insights on Swedish immigrants' personal opinions of African-Americans and their racial attitudes. One Swedish immigrant wrote to his family in Europe, "...I think that you have never seen such a rukus as they had in Duluth the other night, when they lynched three negroes. They sent six of them here to Virginia and they took them out in the woods overnight because they were afraid that they would come and take them also. I for my part have never liked negroes but there is one here who carries the mail

along with us and he is as decent as a white man....”⁷⁴ His words illustrate the dichotomy of Swedish racial attitudes. Publicly, Swedes abhorred the lynchings, but privately they still considered themselves superior to African Americans and lent tacit approval to prevalent racist attitudes of the era.⁷⁵

All of these incidents of rape, assault, and murder occurred either directly or indirectly at the behest of regional mining companies. Early in the twentieth century, the Oliver Mining Company brought in South Slavic, especially Montenegrin immigrants, to destroy the working-class, racial, and ethnic unity fostered by the Italian immigrant, Theofilo Petriella in his role as a union organizer for the Western Federation of Miners. The Montenegrins proved to be effective strike-breakers in 1907, but poor miners and neighbors the following year after resorting to old world tactics of robbing people for money after a forest fire destroyed most of the town. James J. Hill made a similar move in 1913, when the Great Northern Railroad imported African-Americans to ostensibly fill a labor gap. Local immigrants perceived the move as means to lower wages across the board and united in opposition to the arrival of additional African-Americans in the mining district.

While the move failed to achieve its intended result, the public reaction to the appearance of rival African-American laborers points to the indirect effect increasing racial or ethnic tensions by company officials who wish to factionalize a population of workers. This was a more subtle form of manipulation. By placing loyal immigrants in positions of power, such as with the Swedish, Finnish, and Italian mining supervisors. Or, supporting specific politicians and locally influential groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, the mining companies retained their control over the mining districts of the Mesabi Range. The loyal immigrants were rewarded for support with recognition of their middle-class status in American society. Conversely, working-class immigrants from Northern, Southern, and Eastern Europe suffered collectively in a system they had little power to influence. When the working-class immigrants sought to remedy the wrongs they endured on a daily basis through unions, mining officials reacted by ratcheting up racial and ethnic tensions. The tactic was effective, but it cost many African-American and immigrants their lives to the chaos incited by companies as they protected profits and investors, over the aspirations of average workers.

¹ Paul Kahan, *The Homestead Strike: Labor, Violence, and American Industry* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 58

² Eric Arnesen, *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-class History*, Vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1342.

³ Thomas J. Misa, *A Nation of Steel: The Making of Modern America, 1865-1925* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 155-157.

⁴ For biographical information on Rockefeller and details on his financial dealings see Ron Chernow's, *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller Sr.* (New York: Random House, 1998) or David Freeman Hawke's, *John D.: The Founding Father of the Rockefellers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

⁵ For biographical information on Andrew Carnegie see Peter Krass, *Carnegie* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), Harold C. Livesay and Oscar Handlin, *Andrew Carnegie & the Rise of Big Business* (New York: Longman, 2000), and Joseph Frazier Wall, *Andrew Carnegie* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989).

⁶ Henry Oliver Evans, *Iron Pioneer: Henry W. Oliver, 1840-1904* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1942), 222.

⁷ For biographical information on James J. Hill see Duncan J. Karr, *The Story of the Great Northern Railway Company and James J. Hill* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), Michael P. Malone, *James J. Hill: Empire Builder of the Northwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), and Albro Martin, *James J. Hill and the Opening of the Northwest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

⁸ John Syrjamaki, "Iron Range Communities." (PhD diss., Yale University, 1940), 53-55.

⁹ Misa, 164-171.

¹⁰ Jean Strouse, *Morgan: American Financier* (New York: Random House, 1999).

¹¹ Syramaki, 56.

¹² Grace Lee Nute ed., *Mesabi Pioneer: Reminiscences of Edmund Longyear* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1951), 23-37.

¹³ Edmond J. Longyear and Walter R. Eastman, *Longyear: The Mesabi and Beyond* (Gilbert: Iron Range Historical Society, 1984), 79-82.

¹⁴ Albro Martin, *James J. Hill and the Opening of the Northwest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 471-472.

¹⁵ *Svensk-Finska Nykterhets-Forbundet af America* (Rock Island: Svensk-Finska Nykterhets-Forbundet af America, 1908), 74-75.

¹⁶ First Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Parishioner Book, Hibbing, Augustan College, Swenson Swedish Immigration Center film E-123.

¹⁷ Andrew Rolle, *Westward the Immigrants: Italian Adventurers and Colonists in an Expanding America* (Niwat: University Press of Colorado, 1999), 66.

¹⁸ Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Italians on Minnesota's Iron Range," in Rudolph J. Vecoli Ed., *Italian Immigrants in Rural and Small Town America* (Staten Island: The American Italian Historical Association, 1987), 180-182.

¹⁹ Vecoli, 456.

²⁰ Darko Friš, "A Brief Survey of the Activities of the Catholic Church among Slovenian Immigrants in the U.S.A., 1871-1941," in *Slovene Studies* (New York: New York, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1992), 206-207.

²¹ Gerald Gilbert Govorchin, *Americans from Yugoslavia* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1961), 9.

²² Sister Bernard Coleman O.S.B. and Sister Verona LaBud O.S.B., *Masinaigans: The Little Book* (Saint Paul: North Central Publishing Co., 1972), 97-107, 146.

²³ Coleman, 170.

²⁴ Barbara Milkovich, *It's Gone; Did you Notice? A History of the Mesabi Range Village of Franklin, Minnesota* (Huntington Beach: Magarac Books, 2000), 46-48.

²⁵ Donald L. Boese, *John C. Greenway and the Opening of the Western Mesabi* (Grand Rapids: Itasca County College Foundation, 1975), 120-122.

²⁶ Hibbing's newspapers recounted numerous occasions of drunken Finns attacking each other and members of the general public. The June 22, 1905, edition of the *Hibbing Sentinel* article entitled "Four Bad Men with Knives For detailed information on the problems of drunkenness and the rise of temperance societies in Hibbing see, John Kolehmainen's "Finnish Temperance Societies in Minnesota" in *Minnesota History* (22, 1941) 391-403.

²⁷ A February 15, 1908, report from *The Mesaba Ore and The Hibbing News* entitled "Not Socialists" reported that, "Approximately 400 enlightened and Americanized Finns met in Eveleth to protest against Finnish Socialists who had given all Finns a bad name in 1907 for going out on strike." They pointed out only two percent of the 300,000 Finns in America were Socialists.

²⁸ In a June 6, 1914, editorial entitled "Fighting Red Flag Socialism," in *The Mesaba Ore and The Hibbing News* differentiated between conservative and socialist Finns. The author pointed out that not all Finns were socialists any more than all Englishmen were murderers just because one murdered another. He observed that Finnish Anarchists were dangerous, not because they were Finns, rather because of their actions. The article stated, "Finns occupy both high and low places in society. Socialism and Anarchy are key dangers to society and they are not confined to the Finnish race alone."

²⁹ John Syrjamaki, "Iron Range Communities" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1940), 260-267.

³⁰ "Pay Day Celebration: Finlanders and Italians Fight with Rocks and Revolvers," *Mesaba Ore and Hibbing Tribune*, February 25, 1905.

³¹ Syrjamaki, 268-270.

³² Many Finnish immigrants came from *Ostrobothnia* and spoke Swedish as their native language. Newspapers of the period did not differentiate between Swedes and Swedish-speaking Finns, resulting in some confusion over the ethnic origins of supervisors.

³³ Miners reported the graft system and sexual indiscretions to state investigators who came to the Mesabi Range during the 1907 and 1916 strikes. Syramaki, 185-186.

³⁴ Syrjamaki, 156.

³⁵ Syrjamaki, 195.

³⁶ "Would Kill G. H. Thompson," *Mesabi Ore and Hibbing Tribune*, June 8, 1905.

³⁷ Christopher Boehm, *Blood Revenge: The Anthropology of Feuding in Montenegro and Other Tribal Societies* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1984), 165-173.

³⁸ Christopher Boehm, *Montenegrin Social Organization and Values: Political Ethnography of a Refuge Area Tribal Adaptation* (New York: AMS Press, 1983), 32-41.

³⁹ Michael Palaioret, *The Balkan Economies 1800-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 357-370.

⁴⁰ Boese, 108.

⁴¹ "Unsatisfactory as Laborers," *Mesabi Ore and Hibbing Tribune* January 25, 1908.

⁴² "Forest Fire Destroys Village of Chisholm," *Mesabi Ore and Hibbing Tribune* September 12, 1908.

⁴³ "Montenegrists in Night Robes," *Mesabi Ore and Hibbing Tribune* March 7, 1912.

⁴⁴ There is a strong possibility that the Guardians of Liberty were the political arm of the Ku Klux Klan. They espoused the same political, religious, and racial ideologies. A lack of primary sources on the topic forces me to treat the two organizations separately. The Guardians of Liberty appeared to have peaked in 1916, when the Guardians ran a ticket that included Lennie Kugler for president, William Hardy, Oscar Bay, and A. Newberg for trustees, and A. G. Schmidt for recorder. The group called upon all good citizens to oppose any votes for people under Rome's power regardless of party lines. They advocated liberty, free speech, free schools, and a free press. "Religious Bigots Show Their Hand," *The Mesabi Ore and The Hibbing News*, March 4, 1916. After 1916, the Knights of Liberty replaced the Guardians of Liberty in local newspapers as primary supporter of Anglo-Protestant American values. By 1918, the Ku Klux Klan supplanted the knights as chief proponents of white supremacy.

⁴⁵ As an Anglo-Protestant American and superintendent in charge of transporting ore away from mines, Brown was expected to support the Oliver Mining Company. By supporting the miners, Brown angered local officials, which triggered the attack. From the newspaper description, local officials appeared to have acquiesced to the incident or possibly even participated in events that transpired.

⁴⁶ "Ku-Klux-Klan," *Mesabi Ore and Hibbing Tribune*, June 22, 1907.

⁴⁷ The Klan first organized in Pulaski, Tennessee after the end of the American Civil War. By 1867, the Klan spread throughout the former Confederate States, buoyed by support of Southerners opposed to President Lincoln and President Grant's reconstruction plans. Members actively suppressed Reconstructionist and African American attempts to enforce constitutionally guaranteed civil rights laws through widespread acts of violence. However, after the end of Reconstruction, the Klan experienced a general decline in popularity in the South. By the early twentieth century, the Klan lay as a moribund part of folk history in the south until 1915, when William J. Simmons helped to rejuvenate the organization through a call to protect American values. David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 2-3.

⁴⁸ "Klan Wizard Arrives Here," *Virginia Daily Enterprise*, July 23, 1927.

⁴⁹ "Klan Chieftain Hits at Smith," *Virginia Daily Enterprise*, July 25, 1927.

⁵⁰ Syrjamaki, 365.

⁵¹ "Klan Speaker Talks to 1700 Here Last Night," *Virginia Daily Enterprise*, September 3, 1926.

⁵² *Birth of a Nation*, *The Mesabi Ore and The Hibbing News*, November 13, 1915.

⁵³ Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publishing, 1992), 3-4.

⁵⁴ David M. Chalmers, 28-30.

⁵⁵ David M. Chalmers, 31.

⁵⁶ Peter Kivisto, *Immigrant Socialists in the United States: The Case of Finns and the Left* (Rutherford, Teaneck, and Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 141-148.

⁵⁷ Peter Kivisto, 156.

⁵⁸ In one raid, Hibbing police arrested thirteen alien residents at Stevenson location. The incident began when a Finnish immigrant named Warri Maki made seditious remarks against America. When police went to arrest him a short struggle broke out. Police found fourteen firearms and a great deal of IWW literature among the immigrants. Police officers arrested Warri Maki, Joseph Piese, Vilo Sammucci, Everett Kojarvi, Everett Pakkanen, Alen Olin, and Joseph Storich. A local court found them all guilty of weapons possession and fined each 25 dollars plus court costs. Joseph Povich, Lloyd Millan, Mike Miller, all Austrians (Slovenian), were also convicted and charged the same amount. Nicholas Borlich was fined 100 dollars for weapons and whiskey possession, while Anton Holman was also charged and then freed because of his good reputation. Maki was thought to be the IWW leader of Stevenson location and was found with over \$1,000 when arrested. "IWW Leader Is Found Guilty Of Sedition Today," *Mesabi Ore and Hibbing Tribune*, January 23, 1918.

⁵⁹ "Strike Literature Spread Broad Cast Early This Morning," *Mesabi Ore and Hibbing Tribune*, August 8, 1917.

⁶⁰ Chris Julin, "The Other Lynching in Duluth," <http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/projects/2001/06/lynching/olli.shtml> (accessed December 4, 2004).

⁶¹ Patricia Mestek, "Hattie Mosely" (Hibbing: Hibbing Historical Society, 1980), 1-3.

⁶² "Aged Negro Asks Pension," *Mesabi Ore and Hibbing Tribune*, February 7, 1912.

⁶³ The location of the arrest also had importance because Chinese immigrants owned and operated the National Café. The establishment gained notoriety in Hibbing because of the many fights that occurred on the property. The owners also had a more permissive attitude toward sexuality and allowed homosexuals to engage in sexual activity on the property. A few months after the Ross incident, deputies caught four men in a sex act, the men were also arrested and fined. "Invokes the Law," *Mesabi Ore and Hibbing Tribune*, May 16, 1906.

⁶⁴ "Lionized Coon Hurlled From Pedestal," *Mesabi Ore and Hibbing Tribune*, January 27, 1906.

⁶⁵ "No Place for a Black Man," *Mesabi Ore and Hibbing Tribune*, September 6, 1912.

⁶⁶“Negro Labor Introduced on the Mesaba Range by the Great Northern Company,” *Mesaba Ore and Hibbing Tribune* May 14, 1913.

⁶⁷“Hemsk Lynchning” (Ghastly Lynching), *Duluth Posten*, June 15, 1899.

⁶⁸Michael Fedo, *The Lynching's in Duluth* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2000), 95-102.

⁶⁹Minnesota Historical Society, *Duluth Lynchings*, December 2, 2004, <http://collections.mnhs.org/duluthlynchings/html/legalproceedings.htm>.

⁷⁰Governor Burnquist made many controversial decisions during his term in office. As president of the NAACP he was very upset with the lynchings and ordered a detailed investigation of the crime and later enacted anti-lynching laws. However, Burnquist also created the Committee of Public Safety that prosecuted suspected communists during the Red Scare that overlooked the 1918 lynching of Olli Kinkonnen. Fedo, 112.

⁷¹“Lynchaajia Tutktitaan Edelleenkin,” *Industrialisti*, June 24, 1920, “3 Lynchaaja Asetetaan Syytteeseen,” *Industrialisti*, June 25, 1920, and “Kaksi Miestä Vangittu Lynchauksen Johdosta,” *Siirtolainen*, June 23, 1920.

⁷²“Svenska Nationalförbundets Midsommarfest” (The National Swedish Association’s Mid-summer Festival), *Duluth Posten*, June 25, 1920

⁷³Sex Neger Voldtager och en Ung Pige” (Six Negro Villains and a Young Maiden), *Duluth Scandinav*, June 18, 1920.

⁷⁴Minnesota Historical Society, Letters Box #1, 69, Gabriel Walstedt, June 18, 1920.

⁷⁵The difference between the publicly and privately expressed racial opinions still exists in Sweden. Since the 1980s, Sweden absorbed nearly a million South Slavic and African war refugees. The Swedish government has professed the equality of the immigrants, but isolated the refugees in “ghettos” around the country. Additionally, Swedish nationalist and white supremacy groups have physically attacked the immigrants and derided the Slavs and Africans as a drain on the national economy. Jacob Pred, *Even in Sweden: Racisms, Racialized Spaces, and the Popular Geographical Imagination* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2000).